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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSC APPROVES 2-1-1 PLAN FOR SCOTTSBLUFF COUNTY

LINCOLN – Scottsbluff County will have 2-1-1 dialing for health and human services referrals within the next three months.

The Commission at its weekly meeting in Lincoln has approved implementation of 2-1-1 dialing in response to an application from United Way of the Midlands, based in Omaha. Eighteen counties, representing 65 per cent of Nebraska's population, will have access to 2-1-1 by December.

Three-digit dialing by persons seeking a public agency or a private assistance program in human and social services was first granted to United Way of the Midlands on February 20, 2002. The Commission subsequently approved five additional applications previous to ruling on the plan for Scottsbluff County.

Fifth District Commissioner Jerry Vap, who also serves as the Commission's chairman, said the 2-1-1 dialing program provides an easy-to-remember number for people seeking services. "Without 2-1-1, calls go unnecessarily and inappropriately to 9-1-1 and other county and city government offices that may not have the expertise to respond to or direct the calls."

United Way of the Midlands employs certified information and referral specialists to answer calls seven days per week and 24 hours per day. A hearing on the application was conducted October 21 by the Commission with video hookups linking Scottsbluff, Omaha, and Lincoln. The proposal was supported by the City of Scottsbluff, the United Way of Western Nebraska and the Horizons West Medical Group.

In its approval of the application, the Commission gave United Way of the Midlands until February 1 to implement 2-1-1 service.

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